

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 DODE-00 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1123

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

KAMEMBASSY PARIS 3675

AMEMBASSY RABAT

US MISSION NATO 532

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MADRID 1231

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJ: POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION IN SPAIN: ARIAS

PLEDGE TO MOVE AHEAD WITH POLITICAL

ASSOCIATIONS

REF: MADRID A-30 OF FEB 14, 1975

SUMMARY: ANNIVERSARY OF PREMIER ARIAS NAVARRO'S FIRST
PARLIAMENTARY SPEECH FEB 12 FELL DURING CRUCIAL WEEK
FOR HIS PROGRAM TO INTRODUCE POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS.
CLANDESTINE OPPOSITION GROUPS HAVE INDICATED THEY WILL NOT
COME INTO OPEN AND PARTICIPATE. FRAGA IRIBARNE, ON WHOM
UTIMATE SUCCESS OF MOBILIZING POLITICAL CENTER SEEMS TO
DEPEND, ANNOUNCED FEB 19 TTRT FOR THE MOMENT HE WAS
UNPREPARED TO START A POLITICAL ASSOCIATION UNTIL CERTAIN
OTHER ISSUES ABOUT THE STATUTE HAD BEEN CLARIFIED. MOVEMENT
SECGEN UTRERA MOLINA HAS STATED THAT NATIONAL MOVEMENT
WOULD SUPPORT ARIAS'S PROGRAM AND OBSERVE "ABSOLUTE
OBJECTIVITY AND CLEAN HANDS IN PROCESS OF ASSOCIATIONS".

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IN PRIVATE INTERVIEW WITH UPI RELEASED FEB 18, ARIAS SAID

HE SAW NO IMPEDIMENT UNDER STATUTE OF POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS TO SETTING UP OF ONE INCORPORATING "SOCIALIST OR CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC IDEAS" PROVIDING BASIC LAWS WERE RESPECTED. ARIAS, WHOSE CREDIBILITY HINGES ON SUCCESS OF HIS POLITICAL PROGRAM ANNOUNCED A YEAR AGO, FACES UPHILL BATTLE IN OVERCOMING INERTIA, LACK OF PUBLIC INTEREST, AND OPPOSING FORCES WITHIN MOVEMENT WHICH ALL MIGHT THWART HIS PROGRAM BEFORE IT CAN GATHER ANY MOMENTUM. END SUMMARY

1. EMBASSY HAS FORWARDED ANALYSIS OF CURRENT STATUS OF ARIAS NAVARRO'S PROGRAM OF POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION ANNOUNCED FEB 12, 1974 (REFAIR). PROMULGATION OF STATUTE ON POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS IN JAN 1975 IS FIRST MAJOR STEP BY ARIAS GOVT TO CARRY OUT KEY ELEMENT IN HIS PROGRAM FOR PLURALISTIC POLITICAL SYSTEM. SO FAR, POLITICAL GROUPINGS IN OPPOSITION, BOTH CLANDESTINE (SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY) AND TOLERATED GROUPS, HAVE

INDICATED THAT THEY WILL NOT APPLY FOR PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE OPENLY. OTHER POLITICAL GROUPINGS WHICH HAVE COLLABORATED IN PAST WITH FRANCO REGIME BUT DEVELOPED DIFFERENT POLICY DIRECTIONS HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATING INFORMALLY WITH GOVT AND AMONG THEMSELVES TO ORGANIZE POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS. ONE MAJOR OBSTACLE TO SETTING UP A POLITICAL ASSOCIATION IS PRACTICAL DIFFICULTY OF GAINING REQUIRED 25,000 MEMBERS DISTRIBUTED IN MINIMUM OF 15 PROVINCES, A PRESCRIPTION PRESUMABLY DESIGNED TO ELIMINATE POSSIBILITY OF REGIONAL POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS WITH SEPARATIST OVERTONES. SECONDLY THERE IS CONSIDERABLE LACK OF PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND INTEREST IN NEW STATUTE AND PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN MOST ACTIVE IN PROMOTING POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS HAVE BEEN RESTRICTED TO UPPER MIDDLE CLASS WITH FEW CONTACTS WITH WORKING POPULATION. RELATIVELY LONG LEAD TIME IN OBTAINING DEFINITIVE APPROVAL TO BECOME ACTIVE, ABOUT NINE MONTHS, PRACTICALLY EXCLUDES POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS FROM TAKING PART IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR FALL 1975. MOREOVER, A NEW ELECTORAL LAW WILL HAVE TO BE ADOPTED AND, BECAUSE OF ORGANIC SYSTEM IN DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS IN CORTES, POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ELECT MORE THAN A FRACTION OF DEPUTIES ELECTED TO CORTES AND OTHER PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES. ALL OF THESE FACTORS HAVE TENDED TO MAKE PEOPLE HESITANT AND CAUTIOUS ABOUT TAKING

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ADVANTAGE OF NEW STATUTE. MOREOVER, RECENT REPRESSIVE ACTIONS AGAINST CLANDESTINE POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WHICH HAVE HELD OPEN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES INDICATE GOVT'S INTENTION TO CHANNEL ALL POLITICAL ACTIVITY ALONG LINES SET DOWN IN NEW STATUTE.

2. SUCCESS OF ARIAS' PROGRAM WILL DEPEND IN LARGE MEASURE ON MOBILIZATION OF POLITICAL CENTER AND CENTER-RIGHT.

FORMER MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND TOURISM, FRAGA IRIBARNE, HAS FEATURED HIMSELF AS ONLY MAN WITH POLITICAL PROFILE, PERSONAL FOLLOWING AND REFORMIST IDENTIFICATION TO LEAD SUCH A GROUPING. FRAGA MADE POLITICAL SWING IN BARCELONA IN DECEMBER AND MADRID IN JAN AND HAS JUST RETURNED TO LONDON AFTER A SECOND SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH SPANISH LEADERS IN MADRID. OWING TO CREDIT WHICH HE HAS WITH MEDIA FOR PROMOTING LIBERALIZED 1966 PRESS LAW, FRAGA HAS RECEIVED UNPRECEDENTED PUBLICITY ON EACH OF THESE VISITS. IN STATEMENT RELEASED FEB 18, HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS WITH RESPECT TO JURIDICAL BASIS AND ATTITUDE OF GOVT, IN PARTICULAR THE MOVEMENT AND ITS RELATIONS WITH POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS, HAD TO BE RESOLVED BEFORE HE WOULD DECIDE TO SET UP A POLITICAL ASSOCIATION. HE ADDED THAT "HE WOULD HAVE TO STUDY CAREFULLY THE TIMING FOR PARTICIPATION AND THE AVAILABILITY OF REASONABLE GUARANTEES IN PROCESS OF SETTING UP AN ASSOCIATION." AT DEPARTURE INTERVIEW FRAGA SAID HE WAS RETURNING TO HIS POST IN LONDON "SINE DIE", ADDING THAT HE REMAINED "MAN OF THE SYSTEM" AND DID NOT SEEK TO BREAK WITH IT.

3. SINCE FRAGA'S OWN FOLLOWERS AND SYMPATHIZERS IN MEDIA HAVE PREDICTED FOR PAST MONTH THAT FRAGA WOULD ANNOUNCE DURING THIS VISIT DECISION TO SET UP ASSOCIATION, HIS NON-COMMITAL STATEMENT ON DEPARTURE IS WIDELY SEEN HERE AS TACIT ADMISSION OF AT LEAST TEMPORARY SET-BACK FOR FRAGA HIMSELF AND ASSOCIATIONISM AS WHOLE. ACCORDINGLY, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC "TACITO" GROUP ISSUED STATEMENT SAME DAY ANNOUNCING IT WOULD PARTICIPATE IN ASSOCIATIONS ONLY IF CONDITIONS FOR "AUTHENTIC DEMOCRATIZATION" EXISTED, INCLUDING LIBERALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION AND PROGRAM OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS PARALLELING FRAGA'S. SINCE EVENTS HAVE SHOWN THESE CONDITIONS DO NOT

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NOW EXIST, "TACITO" CONCLUDED IT COULD NOT PARTICIPATE.

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4. SECGEN OF MOVEMENT UTRERA MOLINA HELD CEREMONY FEB 18
SWEARING IN NEW NATIONAL DELEGATES FOR PRESS AND RADIO
(EMILIO ROVERO), PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS (JESUS ARAMBURU OLANKAN),
AND EDUCATION (JOSE MARTINEZ EMPERADOR), THREE KEY POSITIONS
IN MOVEMENT. CEREMONY WAS ATTENDED BY SEVERAL MINISTERS
AS WELL AS CAPTAIN GENERAL OF MADRID REGION, LT. GEN.
CAMPANO, AND RETIRED RIGHT-WING GENERALS GARCIA REBULL AND
INIESTA. BOTH ROMERA AND ARAMBURU HAVE BEEN MENTIONED AS
PROMOTERS OF A POLITICAL ASSOCIATION OF TRADITIONAL
MOVEMENT/FALANGE MEMBERS. THEIR NEW ROLES, OF COURSE,
WILL PLACE THEM IN CHARGE OF NATIONAL RRADIO NETWORK AS
WELL AS 40 MOVEMENT NEWSPAPERS AND AN ELECTORAL MACHINERY
THROUGHOUT SPAIN. THESE CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE NOT GONE
UNNOTICED BY POLITICAL OBERRVERS WHO BELIEVE THAT RIGHT-
WING ELEMENTS HAVE AWAKENED TO NEED TO CLOSE RANKS IN
MOVEMENT TO INSURE THAT POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONISM DOES NOT
DEVIATE FROM MOVEMENT'S PRINCIPLES AND CONTROL. IN COURSE
OF CEREMONY, UTRERA SAID "NONE OF THE PEOPLE WITH DIRECT
RESPONSIBILITY IN MOVEMENT WERE INVOLVED AS PROMOTERS OF
ANY POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS NOR WOULD THEY GIVE ANY
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PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT TO ANY ASSOCIATION". HE SAID THAT
REGIONAL SECRETARIAT WOULD EXERCISE "ABSOLUTE OBJECTIVITY
AND PLAY A CLEAN POLITICAL GAME IN PROCESS OF SETTING UP
POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS". DESPITE UTRERA'S STATEMENTS,
SEVERAL WELL-KNOWN BACKERS OF FRAGA IRIBARNE SAID THE
FOLLOWING DAY THAT SECGEN'S STATEMENTS LACKED "SUFFICIENT
CLARITY" AND THAT THEY FEARED THAT PRESS SITUATION HAD TAKEN
A TURN FOR WORSE. FRAGA HIMSELF TOLD PRESS HE

WELCOMED UTRERA STATEMENT BUT THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MORE USEFUL IF CONVERTED INTO DEFINITE RULES.

5. SPANISH MEDIA REPORTED FEB 20 CONTENTS OF EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW MADE JAN 23 BY ARIAS TO UPI CORRESPONDENT IN MADRID. IN IT ARIAS SAID THAT MOVEMENT WAS SUFFICIENTLY LARGE IN SCOPE TO PROVIDE FOR "SOCIALIST AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC IDEAS" SHOULD THEY BE INCORPORATED IN A PROGRAM OF POLITICAL ASSOCIATION PROVIDING THAT THEY WERE CONSISTENT WITH FUNDAMENTAL LAWS. AT SAME TIME ARIAS SAID GOVT WOULD NOT PERMIT "STRIKES OF A POLITICAL NATURE" AND WOULD PREVENT ANY ILLEGAL OR SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES WHICH WOULD STAND IN WAY OF NORMAL COURSE OF DEMOCRATIZATION. MEDIA HAVE INTERPRETED PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS ABOUT SOCIALIST AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC IDEAS AS IMPORTANT APPEAL TO THOSE GROUPINGS IN THE CENTER AND LEFT OF CENTER TO COME TO THE FORE AND TAKE PART IN PROCESS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT.

6. COMMENT: ABSTENTION OF FRAGA IRIBARNE AND HIS BACKERS IS SETBACK TO EFFORTS BY GOVT TO BROADEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND OVERCOME PREVAILING SKEPTICISM ABOUT POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS SCHEME. SINCE BEGINNING HIS HEAVILY PUBLICIZED POLITICAL OFFENSIVE IN JAN, FRAGA HAS MANUEVERED CAREFULLY: (A) TO DETERMINE HOW FAR HE COULD GO WITH REFORMIST POLITICAL PROGRAM IN CONTEXT OF CONSERVATIVE-DOMINATED NATIONAL MOVEMENT, AND (B) TO GAIN ASSURANCES OF PRIME MINISTER ARIAS THAT HIS PROPOSED CENTRIST POLITICAL ASSOCIATION WOULD GET NECESSARY APPROVAL OF NATIONAL COUNCIL TO ORGANIZE AND SUBSEQUENTLY TO PROMOTE CREDIBLE DEMOCRATIC REFORMIST PROGRAM WITH REASONABLE FREEDOM. FRAGA TESTED OUTER LIMITES OF POLITICAL PERMISSIBILITY DURING PREVIOUS VISIT WHEN HELD OUT POSSIBILITY OF PROGRAM OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS LEADING TO DIRECT UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, BI-CAMERAL LEGIS-

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LATURE AND WESTERN-STYLE TRADE UNIONS. RESULT WAS SHARPLY NEGATIVE NUACPLON AMONG ENTRENCHED RIGHT-WINGERS WHO DOMINATE NATIONAL COUNCIL AND, REPORTEDLY ON PART OF FRANCO HIMSELF, ALL OF WHOM SAW IT AS NOTHING LESS THAN DISMANTLEMENT OF CONSTITUTION. INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE NEGATIVE REACTION CREATED STRONG DOUBT THAT FRAGA'S PROPOSED PROGRAM, EVEN WITH ARIAS' SUPPORT, WOULD GAIN APPROVAL OF NATIONAL COUNCIL AND CONVINCED FRAGA MOMENT NOT OPPORTUNE TO ENTER LISTS.

7. WE DO NOT THINK FRAGA HAS GIVEN UP. HE AWARE THAT ARIAS CONTINUES TO NEED HIS PARTICIPATION TO MAKE ASSOCIATIONISM CREDIBLE AND PAUSE AT THIS TBTE MAY WORK IN FAVOR OF COMPROMISE SOLUTION AS RAORMIST PRESSURES CONTINUE TO GROW--AS EXEMPLIFIED BY "TACITO" ULTIMATUM. AT SAME TIME,

FRAGA IS KEEPING HIS OPTIONS OPEN. HIS AFFIRMATION OF IDENTIFICATION WITH AND LOYALTY TO SYSTEM PROBABLY INTENDED TO RESTORE LINKS TO NATIONAL MOVEMENT ESTABLISHMENT THL MAY HAVE BEEN STRAINED BY HIS HERECTICAL CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PROPOSALS.

8. SO FAR ONLY TWO GROUPS HAVE APPLIED TO ORGANIZE ASSOCIATIONS: "PROVERISTAS", REPRESENTING AN INSIGNIFICANT TRADITIONAL GROUPING IN VITORIA, AND "SPANISH SOCIAL REFORM", LED BY CANTAERO DEL CASTILLO WHO ALREADY HAS APPROX 8,000 MEMBERS. CANTAERO, HOWEVER, DOES NOT HAVE POLITICAL PROFILE, FINANCIAL BACKING, OR MEDIA SUPPORT ENJOYED BY FRAGA.HQRILE MAIN EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE POLITICAL CENTER AND RIGHT OF CENTER, THEREFORE,MPEEM TO HAVE COME TO STANDSTILL, RIGHT-WING, REPRESENTINGHPNFLUENTIAL LEADERS IN NATIONAL MOVEMENT, HAVE BEGUN TO MOVE AND LINE UP THEIR FORCES TO INSURE CONTROL OF MOVEMENT'S ORGANIZATION. HUNGER FOR MEANINGFUL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IS PROBABLY SUFFICIENT, HOWEVER, TO MOTIVATE OTHER ASPIRING LEADERS OF CENTER GROUPS SUCH AS FORMER PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER FEDERICO SILVA--TO CONTINUE EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE THEMSELVES, WITH OR WITHOUT FRAGA, EVEN IF CIRCUMSTANCES ARE NOT IDEAL UNDER NEW STATUTE.
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